R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 011 488 RE 000 104

THE LIGHTHOUSE DAY CAMP READING EXPERIMENT WITH DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN.

BY- GOMBERG, ADELINE W.

PUB DATE JAN 66

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.09 HC-$0.28 7P.

DESCRIPTORS- *DISADVANTAGED YOUTH, *ENRICHMENT EXPERIENCE, *LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT, *READING READINESS, SPEECH SKILLS, PROGRAM EVALUATION, EXPERIENCE CHARTS, ACTIVITY UNITS, INTEGRATED ACTIVITIES, INDIVIDUAL INSTRUCTION, SPECIAL COUNSELORS, READING GAMES, LIGHTHOUSE CLUB DAY CAMP, CITIZENS COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC EDUCATION, PHILADELPHIA

A READING PROGRAM DESIGNED FOR DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN AND CONDUCTED BY THE LIGHTHOUSE, A SETTLEMENT HOUSE IN NORTH PHILADELPHIA, AS PART OF ITS DAY CAMP PROGRAM WAS DESCRIBED AND ASSESSED. THE READING PROGRAM WAS DEVELOPED (1) TO BOOST THE OPPORTUNITIES IN READING READINESS FOR CHILDREN ABOUT TO ENTER FIRST GRADE, (2) TO ENRICH LANGUAGE EXPERIENCES, AND (3) TO GIVE REMEDIAL HELP TO CHILDREN WITH READING DEFICIENCIES. THE CAMPERS MET 4 DAYS A WEEK FOR 6 WEEKS. A DAILY SCHEDULE INCLUDED READING ACTIVITIES WHICH COULD BECOME PART OF EACH ACTIVITY. LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT WAS DIRECTED BY 10 PROFESSIONAL COUNSELORS. CONSISTENT GAINS WERE FOUND IN THE AREA OF GENERAL ORAL LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AND READING READINESS. NO MARKED CHANGES WERE FOUND IN WORD RECOGNITION OR HEARING COMPREHENSION. THE PROGRAM WAS ESPECIALLY HELPFUL TO LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT WITH YOUNGER GROUPS. OTHER FINDINGS ARE DISCUSSED. REFERENCES ARE INCLUDED. THIS ARTICLE IS PUBLISHED IN "THE READING TEACHER," VOLUME 19, NUMBER 252, JANUARY 1966. (MD)

ED011488

The Reading Teacher, 19 (Jan. 1966), 243-46, 252.

The Lighthouse Day Camp Reading Experiment with Disadvantaged Children

by Adeline W. Gomberg

During the summer of 1964 an experimental reading program for disadvantaged children was made an integral part of the day camp conducted by the Lighthouse, which is a settlement house (supported by the United Fund) located in the depressed area of North Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The six-week project was launched with the assistance of the Committee on Reading Achievement of the Citizens Committee on Public Education in Philadelphia and a grant from the Dolfinger-McMahon Foundation.*

The purpose of the reading program was threefold: (1) to boost the opportunities in reading readiness for children about to enter first grade, (2) to enrich language experiences, and (3) to give remedial help to children with reading deficiencies.

It was difficult to recruit Negro children: prejudice in the depressed area was not easily overcome. Parents openly expressed their disapproval—both white and Negro—toward integrating children and counselors.

Before Camp Started

A three-day workshop was held for the counselors to explain the purpose of the program and to give training in areas affecting reading: experiential background into the nature and scope of the reading process, books suitable for reading to the children (enjoyment, nature information, historical importance), trips planned for enrichment, and how to emphasize reading in a "traditional" camp.

Children in the Program
(N = 108)

Ages	Male		Female	
	White	Negro	White	Negro
Five and Under	12	1	8	0
Six to Eight	37	4	17	2
Nine to Eleven	17	1	7	2
Totals	66	6	32	4

At this time the settlement's psychiatrist and social welfare agent reported information about each child, and the results of the testing program were reviewed. Each child was individually tested at the Lighthouse Club by a team from Temple University. Children who were already reading were given a word recognition survey; those with little or no reading ability were given readiness tests of information, vocabulary, and auditory discrimination. All were tested for hearing comprehension.

Plans and Procedures

There were ten professional counselors, as follows: four male coun-

*Involved in the project were: Mrs. H. Temin, Chairman of the Committee on Reading Achievement; Mr. Donald Hamilton, Director of the Lighthouse; Mr. James Knopf, Camp Director; Dr. Marjorie Johnson, Director of the Evaluation; and Dr. Adeline Gomberg, Director of Reading activities.

RE000104

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY Ralph Staiger

TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER."

selors (two high school teachers, one divinity student, one beginning college student) and six female counselors (four undergraduate education majors, two elementary teachers). In addition, there were six junior counselors: one male and five female high school students. In general, the ratio of counselors to campers was one to ten. The counselors operated on a five-day basis: four camp days and a conference-evaluation day.

A daily schedule was planned which included transporting the children to and from the camp site (Wissahickon Creek and Gorgas Lane), group activities at the camp (hikes, physical games of skill, nature study, arts and crafts, reading activities that could become part of each activity, and language development), enrichment trips for each Tuesday or Wednesday, and the daily swimming at Gustine Lake.

Six trips were taken, to the *Evening Bulletin* newspaper plant, a farm, International Airport, the Philadelphia Zoo, Historic Philadelphia, and Valley Forge. Before any trip was taken, each counselor was asked to involve his campers in discussing: (1) why we would be taking the trip—what might be seen and (2) the behavior expected during the trip. A discussion was held after each trip for the purpose of enriching vocabulary and understanding, and from which might come exhibits for arts and crafts or items for the camp newspaper and reading games.

Each Friday, when the campers did not meet, the counselors and staff planned reading activities. These revolved about the children's own interests and needs. The emphasis was placed on the type of games (physical and quiet), songs, and stories that would make for understanding and language enrichment and would reinforce accuracy of perceiving, listening, and recalling.* These activities and games were demonstrated by the reading director and included information on the construction of bingo-type reading cards, alphabet "concentration" cards, riddles, rhymes, song, and the like.

The reading director† and her associate gave immediate guidance at the camp on request. They took over the group in discussion, reading of stories, and the construction of experiential charts for the nonreaders, as well as the bingo games for the readers. A word of explanation regarding the bingo games:

Once a trip had been taken and opportunity given for discussion, children were stimulated either to tell stories about those items that most impressed them or to compile lists of forty-eight words unique to the trip. For example, after the visit to Valley Forge these were some of the words listed: valley, window, stained glass windows, guide, guided, George, Washington, roadway, winter, soldiers, hardship, flags, costume, bare. Then on six Manila charts (12 in. by 9 in.) three rows were drawn,

*These activities can be found in the "Day Camp Reading Manual" written by the author. Mimeographed by the Citizen's Committee on Public Education in Philadelphia, Land Title Building, Philadelphia.

†Mrs. Patricia Grasty, a reading supervisor with the Philadelphia Public Schools and a graduate of Temple University.

ruled to show nine boxes. In the center box was written "Free Space." The forty-eight words were printed in manuscript, one in each box. Some words were repeated, using different inflectional endings. On smaller Manila cards (2 in. by 3 in.) identical words were inscribed. The first time the game was played, the director or her associate did the calling. Variations of the game were played, i.e., initially showing the card as the word was given, giving the words orally, selecting different children as callers, etc. To win, the card had to be filled and the child able to read his cards.

Findings and Discussion

1. Consistent gains appeared more in evidence in the area of general oral language development than in reading per se. The nonreaders showed gains on the post-testing. This was not the case with the older groups. To quote from the evaluation of the program:*

> On all the readiness tests, mean gains were shown by the groups tested. These ranged from 1.33 points on range of information to 3.73 points in vocabulary. Individuals showed markedly different degrees of change, some exhibiting losses at the same time that others made larger gains. . . . For individual children, the range was from an increase of sixty percentage points to a loss of forty-five. . . .
>
> . . . improvements in oral language ability seem to have occurred among the younger, basically non-reading children. Their ranges of information and vocabulary appear to have generally increased. Auditory discrimination ability generally seemed improved. On the basis of observations, it seems that there was increased spontaneity in oral language.

*Dr. Marjorie Seddon Johnson, "Formal Evaluation Program of the Lighthouse Day Camp," *Delaware Valley Reading Bulletin*, Vol. 6, March 1965.

The experiences provided these children appear to have brought gains in ability to understand the demands of a task presented to them and to follow the directions given.

2. No marked changes appeared to occur in word recognition or hearing comprehension. It had been expected that the experiences at camp would stimulate better listening, better thinking, and precision in response to thought processes (association, inferences, recall, retention) since the results of the pre-testing in this area were extremely low. Contrary to what had been anticipated, very little improvement was shown by the post-testing.

A sharp difference between the two testing situations must be noted. The first testing was done free from distraction, indoors at the Lighthouse Club; the second testing was done outdoors at the camp site, near enough to hear those actively engaged in physical games. Children seemed more reluctant to attend to the comprehensive tests requiring sustained attention to the reading done by examiners. In her evaluation Dr. Johnson noted: "It was obvious, in many cases, that the child being tested was simply unable to resist the drawing power of the surroundings in order to concentrate for a sustained period. . . ."

3. Most useful activities: For the younger groups, especially the nonreaders, the program definitely boosted language development. Initially they showed an immaturity in using sentences. To any question, they responded with a single noun or action verb. They progressed from a simple sentence to the use of prepositional

phrases and descriptive adjectives. This advance resulted from the counselor's work with experiential charts on which she recorded what they said initially. She then encouraged them to talk more freely. As they accepted her enthusiasm, they began to model their own speech after hers. Each child asked to have these charts repeatedly read.

Eight counselors were enthusiastic about the bingo games, two gave lukewarm approval. Those approving listed these comments on their weekly evaluation sheets: "The boys kept pestering me to do it." "They watched you making some for the younger groups and wanted to know when you'd come to their group." "The first thing they yelled when we got to the Lehigh Building on the rainy day was, 'Hooray, we got time to make a bingo game.'" "My girls want to play it over and over with each taking a turn. I am getting bored watching them."

4. Least useful activities: Anything that looked like "school work" was rejected, for example, the commercial reading games (Dolch, Phonic Rummy, etc.). The clue to this rejection was expressed by an older child: "Gee, that's like school —who needs it."

5. The women counselors, initially more enthusiastic about the purpose of the reading program, steadily provided the necessary stimulation and motivation for the reading activities. The men were more hesitant and openly resented the intrusion of the reading program.

6. Summary and suggestions: Two of the objectives were met, reading readiness and language enrichment. For a majority of the eighty-one children eight years of age and younger, gains were recorded in oral language development. For some it appeared to help avoid the losses in word recognition that are typical of the summer lapse. That no marked change occurred in word recognition or hearing comprehension skills may be due in some part to the unfortunate testing conditions at the end of the program.

The experiment appeared to suggest a promising technique that can be easily duplicated in other large metropolitan centers during the summer. It further suggested that preschool disadvantaged children can be better motivated toward a readiness for reading.

As in every experiment, we discovered what should be retained and reinforced, and what might be discarded. Clearly, the initial error was in not providing a more intensive training program with our counselors prior to camp. Second, we might have been too permissive in allowing the counselors to structure their reading activities. In any future workshop technical books on the teaching of reading will be provided. Also more structured reading experiences and individualized instruction will be provided. Children must be given more time in which to read, to choose books, and to talk about stories of interest to them.

Finally, the older children might be additionally motivated. One should

(Continued on Page 252)

Paradoxically, however, the near tragedy in our lives can be heightened by humor. Humorous poetry, when children respond to it with twinkles in their eyes and wide grins on their faces, doesn't have to be explicated. It just has to be enjoyed.

(*Raymond J. Endres is Associate Professor of Education at Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio.*)

(*Acknowledgment: "In the Clearing," by Robert Frost, Copyright 1962 by Robert Frost, is reprinted by permission of Holt, Rinehart & Winston. The author also gratefully acknowledges permission to quote from other authors and publishers.*)

References

1. Adams, Franklin P. "The Rich Man." In William Cole (Ed.), *Humorous Poetry for Children*. Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1955.
2. Anonymous. In Cole, *Op. cit.*
3. Belloc, Hilaire. "The Hippopotamus." In Cole, *Op. cit.* (From *Cautionary Verses*, copyright Random House.)
4. Ciardi, John. *The Man Who Sang the Sillies*. New York: Lippincott, 1961.
5. Daly, Thomas Augustine. "Giuseppe, the Barber." Let's Read Together Poems—7. Evanston, Ill. Row Peterson, 1950. (From a publication by Harcourt Brace & World.)
6. Frost, Robert. *In the Clearing*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962.
7. Nash, Ogden. "The Purist." In William Cole, *Op cit.* (From *I'm a Stranger Here Myself*, Little, Brown.)
8. Rosetti, Christina. *Sing-Song*. New York: Macmillan, 1924.
9. Thompson, James. "Once in a Saintly Passion." In George Woods (Ed.), *The Literature of England*, Vol. 2. Chicago: Scott, Foresman, 1936.

The Lighthouse Day Camp Reading Experiment

(Continued from Page 246)

use the strength we discovered: their attachment to one another. Many of the older children had brothers and sisters in the younger group, and toward them our nine to eleven groups seemed like parent surrogates. The older children administered reprimands, words of praise, and helped in dressing and other ways. This should be capitalized upon. We might have them read to the younger groups, thus alerting us to their own reading ability. They might also become more willing to accept our reading guidance.

(*Dr. Gomberg is Assistant Professor of Education at Beaver College and director of the college's reading clinic.*)